Understanding the Contextual and Interpretive Performance Distinctiveness of Totoeme Dance among the People of Avatime, Ghana

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Abstract
The drive to interpret African musical performances has led to a systematic research on the structures of different genres of African music among scholars in the field of ethnomusicology. One of these African musical genres with its uniqueness is Totoeme. It is an old traditional Ewe musical type practiced mostly by Northern Ewe women in Ghana and Togo. This paper highlights the context of performance and how the cultural bearers understand the Totoeme musical type as performed by Avatime people of Ghana. Through descriptive research, the author presents and interprets the performance distinctiveness of Totoeme music to complement the various facets of ethnomusicological research. It is observed that Totoeme musical genre expresses symbolism reflecting the organization and relation between musical performance and social structure. The paper also delineates the perceptual qualities and the manifestation of the instructional potency of Totoeme musical genre in Ghanaian schools.
Keywords: Totoeme, Avatime, Contextual, interpretation, Symbols

1. Introduction

The paper is an inquiry into the relationship between the contextual settings of totoeme music and the meaning given to these structures in view of the symbols used in the performance of rituals where the music predominates. Extended efforts have been made in recent decades to develop a relationship between musical performance in a traditional context and musical meaning [Nketia, (1964,); Burns, (2009); Fiagbedzi, (2009); Stone, (2008; 2010); Ampene, (2005); Clayton, (2001); and Saighoe, (1997)]. Although these works are outside Avatime setting and context, the paper takes their perspectives in terms of musical expression, cultural values and contextual meaning to discuss the main contextual settings of totoeme musical performance.

The performance of totoeme music in the socio-cultural activities of Avatime is part of a highly complex performative and ritual process in which interaction between various social agents – performers, audience, ritual specialists, among many other players take place. These contexts embrace a synthesis of the musical art forms and the attention is principally on the use of totoeme music in the context of the Amuna (Rice Festival), Easter durbar, funeral rites of a queen mother and enstoolment of a new queen. The paper consists of the conceptual framework, the methodology, discussion of the contextual settings and symbolic expressions and then draws conclusions and recommendations.

2. Conceptual framework

The concept of music in an African cultural context encompasses more than patterned expressive sounds analogous to felt life. It is more than drumming and dancing. In Africa, the concept of music is an integrated process of singing, dancing and instrument playing (Ohene-Okantah, 2003).

Generally, the music under study is an aspect of traditional Avatime life which provides repositories of Avatime traditional beliefs, ideas, wisdom and feelings. These beliefs, ideas and feelings do not just throw light on the music in the strict referential sense but enhance the meaning of the music forming part of their tradition. Naturalists see tradition to possess an unchanging essential core of cultural traits passed through time, a significant shift in this conceptualization came with the influential work on invention of tradition in the 1980s (Handler and Linnekin 1984:273, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Tradition is not a bounded entity but a process (Handler and Linnekin 1984:286), hence, there is usually some modern trends that are adapted to make it unique. In another development, Chakrabarty views practices in present-day India through the lens of historical examinations, pointing to social and knowledge realms that escaped the rationalizing hegemony of colonial discourse, and persisted alongside modern, rational practices (Chakrabarty 2000, 2002). In the light of this, the paper discusses the contextual setting of a musical tradition making reference to the past and the present to draw on the distinctiveness of such a musical practice.

Furthermore, rituals in the various contexts of totoeme cannot be explained without constant reference to their construction and articulation with the wider Avatime political structure and other forms of institutionalized discrimination and marginalization by the society. Thus, Kligman (1988) writes that while rituals do not

necessarily "represent everyday interactions", they articulate the tenets of "social contract on which everyday interactions are based." Several indigenes including the women participants seem to share many beliefs and understandings about traditional rituals using water, alcoholic drink or blood of animals as symbols. Inferences about the use of these three liquids are grounded in the views of Acheampong (1996) about social history of alcohol, blood, and water in Ghana. As the paper delves into contextual settings of totoeme music, these symbolic representations which seem to construct meanings in the contexts will be briefly discussed in relation to the rituals involving the totoeme music. Discussion of these symbols is significant since they are tied to specific additional concepts which are known by all who are familiar with the culture.

3. Methodology

The study was a descriptive research that adopted contextual and ethnographic approaches. Like Nketia (2005) argues, it is based on the assumption that ethnographic description, analysis and interpretation of music events approached from the perspective of context should lead to a richer and more dynamic view of music in culture. A musical performance in many ways generates a renewal shared knowledge and experience. Thus, the contextual approach enables a researcher to observe how this experience unfolds both in the musical process and in the interaction with the audience. Indeed, studying an indigenous musical tradition has to be grounded in observations of performance and their supporting oral traditions in contexts so that the generative factors that establish the renditions could be identified and understood along with the stabilizing factors that preserve the identity of a genre over a period of time. Although some scholars (Rahn, 1983; Kerman, 1985) express dissatisfaction with the contextual studies because they feel that contextual studies do not give sufficient attention to the music itself, the approach has received general acceptance and refinement with renewal interest in the structure of music events (Amoaku, 1975; Stone, 2008). Notwithstanding the impressions given, this study is tilted towards the consideration of contexts and not much on the music itself.

As a result, three-step procedure suggested by Qureshi (1987) was used, thus, obtaining information from the performers, observing the performance and analysing views on the performance with the performers. With that in view, information obtained from performers and data obtained from the video on totoeme the musical idiom was analyzed as a structure of musical units and rules for their combination. Also, there was an examination of totoeme performance contexts as a structure consisting of units and rules of behaviour. Analysis of this was based on considerations to the cultural and social structure behind the performance occasion of totoeme. The method of analysis that could identify and utilize pertinent musical and sociocultural data of totoeme was entrenched in field work. Like Qureshi (1995, p.332) states,
"the experience of fieldwork indelibly connects music with the living processes and relationships that generate it, thereby further reinforcing the anthropological privileging of present over past". Data was therefore categorized and analyzed according to the related context of performance considering the historical aspect and relating to the current practices.

4. Contextual Settings for Totoeme Music

The people of Avatime have evolved various rites, rituals and festivals for all the important events of life. Among the Avatime, there are the rites of child naming (linyikɔkɔ), puberty (kusakɔkɔ), marriage (kudzegbanɔ) and funeral (kunu). Far more important than these rites that are usually performed by the little family or clan circle, are the annual and seasonal festivals that bring together all the people of the town or village and their allies.

4.1 Amuna (Rice) festival

Totoeme is used to feature prominently at the celebration of Avatime Rice Festival called Amuna. Until October, 2010 the celebration of the Amuna festival had been suspended since 1971 due to situations precipitated by environmental and political factors. The festival of earlier times brought the sons and daughters from all the seven Avatime towns together in a festive mood. In an attempt to continue the communal gathering, the Avatime state instituted the congregation of local indigenes in every town at a durbar to fill the void created by the absence of the Amuna festival.

The revitalization of the Festival in Avatime has encouraged the traditional authorities of the Avatime to consider rotating the celebration venue in the towns. Special recognition is granted the women during the festival for their role in sustaining the community. Hence, a state festival or durbar does not leave out the performance of totoeme. The festival was re-instituted in 2010 at Vane, the seat of the paramount chief, Osie Adzatekpor and totoeme music was predominant. The performance involved students, under the tutelage of their local resource persons. The totoeme songs are usually culminated in a dance that serves as a medium of cultural education and

inter-generational communication among the people. They also play an important role in the preservation of Avatime cultural heritage, transmitting knowledge and experiences as a people to future generations.

Indeed, these occasions help to sustain certain rites such as ablabe which would have gone extinct forever to lose our cultural heritage. The performance of totoeme during the festival guides attitudes to family and social life and provides the people the opportunity to fraternize and socialize, thereby binding them as one people.

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Women performing Totoeme Music in Amuna festival

4.2 Easter Durbar

The Easter durbar has become a reputable event in the life of the Avatime people. It is bounded by a definite beginning characterized with a rich procession of chiefs, queen mothers and an array of events. Easter was considered as a much convenient time to congregate in view of the holidays that come with the occasion. The occasion is usually sandwiched by a huge crowd of jubilant supporting indigenes throughout the celebration. Its structure is built upon a core or armature of ritual including ablabe (puberty rites). In the past, ablabe was organized for girls to initiate them into adulthood, amidst totoeme music making. With the advent of education, Christianity and modernity, the ablabe rites have been modified to suit the contemporary. During the Easter durbar, a young woman from one of the clans in the community re-enacts the performance of ablabe of the Avatime people which were held in the past just to save the tradition from extinction. Surrounded by her chaperons, the ablabe initiate is taken through local beauty treatment. Before going to the durbar, the ablabe initiate, queen mothers and their attendant girls need some preparation.

Dressing the main figure at the core of Easter totoeme can take hours because the initiate in contemporary time wears a lot more accessories than their counterparts of earlier years. For the Avatime women, one thing has to be clear: the beads and ornaments worn around the neck, the waist line, wrist, around the calves and the loin cloth should be eye-catching. In putting the finishing touches, the chaperons apply traditional and Western glittery make-ups. Totally satisfied with her image, the chaperons and other women accompany the initiate to the river for the rites to be performed. Having finished that the initiate, clad in ablabe regalia, with her entourage joins the Easter procession as the women sing totoeme songs to herald the arrival of the traditional authorities of which she (the initiate) is part. The women who accompany the ablabe initiate to the durbar sing series of processional songs, unaccompanied, until they arrive at the durbar grounds. For that moment the status of the initiate, irrespective of her age and social status had been elevated and accorded that honour due any traditional authority.

Consequently, some of the activities that are in consonance with the Christian religion were carried over to the Easter durbar. Among them is the performance of totoeme music and dance by the women. During the occasion, school children are given the opportunity to watch and take part in the musical performances to aid their study of African music in the classroom.

Initiate and her entourage parading the arena during Easter durbar

The women usually conclude the ceremony with totoeme musical performance under the leadership of Awasi. The announcement of totoeme to feature in any recreational context such as Easter, Amuna and enstoolment brings Awasi to her feet. Her presence in the arena attracts all loyal Avatime women present who flock to the arena to perform and enjoy their favourite totoeme songs. The ablabe initiate, at this time joins the women with her entourage in the performance of totoeme songs while other queen mothers observe and admire the art from where they sit gorgeously in their insignia. Duration of performance this time is ten minutes. In a circular formation, women sway their bodies with some of them playing the gourd shakers to keep the pause of the music, "an activity the women cherish" (Anku, 2009, p.50).

4.3 Funeral of a Queen mother

During the funeral of the queen mother, women select songs that reflect the status of the deceased and the circumstances for the death in spite of speculations sometimes attached to the death. At times, the women utilize this opportunity to hit hard on culprits of wickedness by casting insinuations using totoeme songs.

The performance of totoeme during a funeral setting focuses on singing and bell accompaniment. Totoeme songs at funerals also express sentiments through the song texts. Anyidoho (1997) considers song texts to be the most significant genre of Ewe verbal art-which also includes aɖetrɔnyawo, (tongue twisters), ahanoŋkɔwo, (drinking names), lododowo (proverbs), adzowo (riddles), ŋutinyawo or xotutu (epic narratives) and gliwo (folktales)– because they express popular sentiments and allow individual creative development. Finnegan (1970), in her study of African oral literature, devotes a chapter to song texts, which she classifies as a genre of poetry. She indicates that we may start to examine the effects of oral songs on society by analyzing them as literature. Okpewho (1992) categorizes a cross section of African song texts according to common themes of love, criticism, praise, war and death and in his argument, a significant contribution to knowledge, he (1992) indicates that one of the social relevancies of oral literature in the context of Africa is to record life – not only ancient history but also the important stages in contemporary life cycles including birth, initiation, marriage, social advancement and death.

The totoeme song texts at the funeral represent and articulate the views and experiences of women about life in general. Returning to the arguments of Anyidoho (1997) and Okpewho (1992) it can be said that songs have the power to disseminate critical views about contemporary society through the cover of entertainment. The Avatime women actually form an important body of oral literature that pursues the struggle to keep traditional music of totoeme relevant in the changing times of contemporary African towns of Avatime.

With totoeme songs, female royals of Avatime towns and their elders led by a path clearer visit the deceased queen, as she lays in state, to perform the rituals that would separate the dead from the living. As part of their worldview, the Avatime believe in a variety of spiritual beings who may act benevolently or malevolently to human behaviour (Opoku, 1978; Amoaku, 1975). The spiritual beings such as aye for the creator (God), and ancestral spirits whose aid may be solicited in the collective libation is significant to the performance of a ritual for the deceased queen to part company with other queens and elders. It is believed that this ritual enables the deceased embark on a restful and peaceful spiritual journey to her maker and ancestors.

Women elders and their subordinates as representatives from all Avatime towns converge at the forecourt of the community centre. Gratified with the number of women present, Awasi (totoeme queen mother), orders the

procession to move to the venue for the funeral with totoeme processional songs. The formation of a single line is emblematic to the performance of totoeme in Avatime. The order of the queue for the procession during the funeral of a Queen mother is : I: Gbadzeme bell player (path clearer), Amedzɔfe bell player, bearer of mixed herbs, Awasi, bearer of the ritual drink (palm wine), other queen mothers, female elders and other female participants.

**Women in procession to pay their last respect to the
late Queen mother**

The women, though desperate, energetically present series of totoeme repertoire of songs which are laments to express sorrow and the nature of human existence as they advance towards the body of the deceased.

When all the women in the procession get settled in the immediate proximity where the deceased is laid in state, the singing is brought to a halt to give way for the performance of the rituals and to pay their last respect to the deceased. Their linguist steps forward to enunciate their last words to the deceased queen mother after the invocation of the gods and ancestral spirits. One of the elders then applies the local perfume prepared from herbs and myrrh on the right hand of the deceased. With heavy hearts the women sing totoeme songs at the community square where they form a circle, and move round three times before they disperse.

It is difficult to understand the ritual performed by the women. Even among the women, who are participants, usually have varied opinions about the significance and meaning given to the performance of the ritual to their deceased royal. It is assumed that we cannot understand a traditional ritual like a funeral celebration unless we move beyond the rather rigid opposition between tradition and modernity still prevalent in ritual studies (De Witte, 2003) to acknowledge the open, flexible nature of tradition that makes it so vibrant and modern.

It is worth noting that an ordinary funeral celebration among the Avatime is inundated with funeral dirges the women sing while they parade the streets to register their pain for the life lost.
In contrast, the performance of totoeme songs without drum accompaniment forms part of the funeral celebration for a deceased female royal as her body lies in state. It is a mark of honour to the deceased queen mother, a reflection of the belief system, social life and worldview.

4.3.1 Enstoolment of a new Queen mother
The enstoolment of a new queen mother takes place usually in the evening right after the burial of the late queen mother. In the past the candidate was secluded and groomed for three days. The duration has been reduced to one day in contemporary times in view of economic, educational and modern trends in society. The new candidate is outdoored the following day unlike the previous times when she was confined and outdoored after three days in a ceremony witnessed by the entire community. This event wipes away the tears from the eyes of the women, the family of the previous royal and the entire community. The community expresses joy by wearing white apparel during the enstoolment rites. The white clothes worn on the day of enstoolment signifies success in acquiring a candidate peacefully, purity and cleanliness for the queen mother and the entire community. The support and

endorsement for the new queen mother goes with the performance of totoeme songs at different stages of the celebrations. No other song is performed.

Identifying a candidate for a replacement was the first step in enstoolment and coronation.

Anointing a new queen mother exerts a huge burden on the elder of the family whose duty is to provide a rightful heir to the vacant stool. Usually, three nominations are made and the best and available candidate receives the mixture of white clay, a symbol of conferred authority on the candidate. The chosen candidate is then ushered into an unidentified quarters for seclusion and education about traditional issues. This is because the chiefs, queen mothers and other court officials have specialized ceremonial duties; and the well being of Avatime state and its citizenry is thought to depend upon their knowledge and accurate ceremonial performances. In all these instances, women play an important role in it as indicated by De Witte (2003) and Gyamera (2010).

The day of the enstoolment is greeted with excitement in the hearts of many who are seen preparing for the enstoolment ceremony. Close family elders and traditional queen makers accompany the new queen mother to the river side for the ritual bath. She is swathed in a male cloth and physically supported at all sides to conceal her from public view. The journey to the river side is done silently, without musical sound or the usual yelling. Nonetheless, the journey on foot to the river side by the attendants and the new queen mother is announced on the talking drums in an extensive magnificent rendition; a signal to the entire community for the start of the ceremony. While women pour out in their numbers to witness the ritual bath and join the procession to the town, their male counterparts and elderly women are already seated at the community square to receive their royal. Notwithstanding the restrictions, few young men accompany the women to provide security and moral support.

Awasi and queen makers pouring libation during enstoolment

The ritual ceremony is believed to be controlled by the Supreme God from whom they derive their powers. Both oral and documentary sources (Opoku, 1978, p.19; Perbi, 2004. p.101) affirm that every ethnic group in Ghana believes in a supreme God. This God is thought to be so great and far off. He needs to be worshipped and approached through intermediaries. Just as a king or a chief could not be approached directly by their subjects except through office holders, so also God could not be approached directly except through intermediaries.

The new queen mother is adorned and decked out in a traditional male Ewe kente cloth having a white background with beads around the neck and wrists to match. She wears a circlet made of silk headscarf over her head as a symbol of authority and responsibility. Her predecessors in the royal fraternity from other clans serving as chaperons play a key role in her dressing and make-up to suit the occasion. These chaperons and attendants bring their experience and expertise to play. Sandwiched by the queen makers and other queen mothers present, the procession is led from the river side to the town by the path clearer. Totoeme processions are normally seen in a single file. There is an advance team of chorus which moves to and fro to announce the appearance of the royal. Amidst the singing of totoeme songs, the women form a single line following their path clearer. The file begins with women in the community, followed by the path clearer, the bell player, the linguist staff bearer, and then the queen mother, the holder of her umbrella, and few women elders who surround the queen mother. At the rear is the drum accompaniment provided by the male drummers. The lead singers unfold series of songs from their memory to glorify the queen and to relax her nerves. At the very outskirts of the town the women sing the opening songs to announce their arrival in town for the coronation.

The newly installed queen mother with her patrilineal kinsmen

Tesikpoe finishing the acceptance dance on behalf of the Queen Mother

5. Instruments of Totoeme music

Totoeme instrumental set comprises agbeakpa (an old pan which keeps the time), asiʋuvi (one small sonorous drum) and asiʋuga (a medium sized drum). The instruments are played by men because Avatime tradition does not allow women to play drums. This situation is common in female ensembles in Ghana as found in nnwonkorɔ and apatampa among the Ashanti and Fanti traditions respectively. During the Easter durbar, the Amuna festival and coronation rites totoeme performances are concluded with an instrumental section while the funeral setting is devoid of instrumental segment to dichotomize the mood in which the participants are operating.

Agbeakpa, Asiʋuga, and Asiʋuvi

6. Symbolic Expressions in Totoeme music and social structure

Every performance of totoeme has a central figure or personality as the focus around which all attention is directed. During the Easter durbar and the amuna festival the initiate who re-enacts ablabe rites is the hub of totoeme performance. The dead and newly appointed queen mothers are the central focal points of the royal funeral and the enstoolment respectively. All these ceremonies which incorporate totoeme music have associated rituals that are symbolically represented to express meaning. In these occasions, libation is made and the

corresponding rites are performed. The fluids Water, alcohol and blood are some of the symbols expressing meanings.

Acheampong (1996) tracks permutations in the uses and meanings of the three powerful fluids (alcohol, water, and blood). The ritual significance of alcohol, blood, and water in the pre-colonial histories and cultures of the Akan, Ga-Adangme, and Ewe has not seen any significant change even in contemporary times. The centrality of Avatime culture to the use of alcohol and water is reflected in Avatime life cycle events, and occasions. The use of alcohol and water in the performance of rites associated with totoeme demonstrates their importance in the life of the Avatime. The question as to why people use alcohol is fundamental to the social history of alcohol because it raises the issue of meaning people attach to drink. Acheampong (1996) highlights assertions made by Douglas (1987) ranking drink as a ritual object, a social good and economic commodity having meanings which differ from society to society. Hence, the meanings attached to the use of water in the enactment of ablabe performed during Easter, the ritual bath preceeding the outdooring of either the new queen mother or the ablabe initiate on occasions during which totoeme is performed may differ from society to society but the Avatime community has a common meaning parallel to individual signification of the rites. In contrast the cleansing ritual for the deceased queen mother is performed with water from a stream called Kenyimenia while she lays in state.

Water is considered the highest potent agent for cleansing (Obianim, 1990), a symbol of rebirth and assumption of new life. In the Christendom, purification is done with water to signify the baptism of Jesus in the Bible to evoke the spirit of God in starting His ministry. Moreover, the role of water to the Avatime from another perspective is related to the protection from the river deity. Its help is solicited for either the initiate or the queen mother confirming the assertion made in Opoku (1978, p.60) that "almost all West African communities believe that there are deities inhabiting the waters". They are looked upon as beneficent deities who preside over the sea, rivers, lakes and lagoons.

Similarly, Nukunya (2003, p.58) points out that "the practice of putting the first morsel of food or the first drop of drink of water on the ground before satisfying oneself is just in the many ways the presence of ancestors is shown". This view encompasses the living, the dead and unborn in a religious structure in which interaction with Mawu (the Supreme Being in Ewe language), the ancestors, and the gods occupy a central place in the day–to– day existence.

Distinctively, the newly installed queen mother is fortified with the blood of a lamb sacrificed in a special ritual. The people at the venue give their consent to the declaration and blessings conferred on the queen mother by yelling. These rituals are climaxed with a libation where one of the women, serving as a linguist, exhibits her rhetoric skills with creativity. The selection of the female linguist is done vis-à-vis the spiritual power of menstrual blood in Avatime. Akyeampong (1996) asserts that the image of menstrual flow becomes associated with draining power and filt. Hence, the numerous taboos circumscribing menstruating women in their contact with men and shrines are widespread among Ghanaian traditionalists (Obianim, 1990; Sarpong, 1999; Gyamera, 2010). Such inferences I suppose form the basis for the inclusion and participation in royal activities by traditional authorities to consider the symbolic realm of a menstruating girl or woman among the Avatime which guides the choice of tesikpoe (devotee girl) to dance in front of the newly installed queen mother. Traditionally, Avatime women do not pour libation or perform rituals involving sacrificing of animals. However, in this instance, totoeme tradition has given the Avatime women the autonomy as independent citizens with the men lending moral support. Nevertheless they do not lose sight of the efficacy in having a woman of advanced age to perform the rituals. It is quite clear that a single object can occur in different rites, events and circumstances (Biebuyck, 1975). This means those symbols are multivalent in usage and function and they can express different meanings depending on the actual contexts in which they occur.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

Totoeme dance is very distinct considering the pragmatic explanation that has focused on its tacit values and assumption to espouse the understanding of the contextual setting of such a musical genre. It is examined that the culture of Avatime is reflected in totoeme music through the various important ceremonies that the music features reflecting Avatime worldview about traditional political hierarchy and the role of subjects to foster a united society. Furthermore, the integration of totoeme into the Easter durbar at Gbadzeme and Amuna festival in all Avatime towns is the life wire of the genre in absence of installation rites. Again, the presentation of totoeme by basic schools at their cultural festivals has broadened the scope of knowledge about the music among the youth. Collectively, these efforts help to sustain totoeme in the minds of the performers and audience.

The performance of totoeme music in the various contexts gives an idea about the norms, values, worldview, symbols and classification of reality among the Avatime people. Shepherd & Wicke (1997) in making their contribution to the understanding of music as a form of human experience argue that music is fundamental to social life. Nukunya (2003, p.214) corroborates this by establishing that "socialization is the principal means by which people acquire the values of their ethnic groups". As long as music is perpetuated by the very people in society ideas about socio-cultural norms and values are grossly brought to bare in the music of those traditional societies.

In the nutshell, the performance of totoeme in each context (Amuna festival, Easter, funeral of a queen mother or enstoolment of a queen mother) may be regarded as an encapsulated expression of shared cultural forms and values of Avatime society. These include not only the music itself but also the totality of associated behaviour and worldview. This comes a long way to enhance and broaden their traditional knowledge. Secondly, the study provides a vital source of information on a genre which has been unfamiliar to many outside the traditional area.

It is also evident that totoeme music is tied up with social structure, the extent to which its form is bound up with the verbal thematic patterns and textually in the context of performance. Like dirges, Nketia (2005) points out that its total expression includes the manner in which the women wail, the stylized movement of the women and the stylized sob that punctuates the section of a piece. This same cultural experience has been documented on avihawo by Osei-Tutu, (1982) and Adipa-Abutiate (1999). They report that avihawo reveals the order and content of other traditional dances in Avatime area.

To conclude each contextual setting of totoeme provides an opportunity for dealing in the dimensions of time and space. It creates an event where, through active participation within the group people are able to contemplate and reflect upon their life situations in the community.
The Government of Ghana, through the Ghana Education Service has recommended the use of indigenous music in schools, colleges and universities (CRDD, 2007). Equally, there is a cultural policy in Ghana which supports the promotion of traditional music at all levels. A recent review of the syllabus at the basic level reveals advocacy for the performance of indigenous music in schools and in our communities. However, most Ghanaians, especially the educated youth, Christians and urban dwellers find it either difficult or reluctant to participate in the performance of indigenous music. The ritual processes of totoeme are clearly stated to establish their relationship in the immediate context of situation as well as other frames of reference suggested by the occasion and the nature of the materials that are brought together.

The performance of totoeme in its context reflects the lifestyle and local indigenous knowledge of Avatime people (Kedeɔne). This is evidenced in the way the various contexts of performance of totoeme music have been suitably structured incorporating the charm of totoeme songs, costume for participants and central figures, instrumental rhythms, and extra musical discourses are valuable cultural heritage and benefit to society. Hence, the support from government institutions should unite together in promoting and supporting the conservation of totoeme and other local indigenous culture. The totoeme music and its contextual settings are scholarly materials that add to ethnomusicological archives which are educational resources to teach the youth and students to learn, absorb and understand their cultural heritage. To put the study within the wider context of ethnomusicology, the aspects are treated from cultural perspectives in their contexts. In this way this article offers not only a discussion of Avatime cultural values embedded in totoeme music, but also an introduction of the genre to the scholarly world.

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